

## Peer Reviewer Code of Conduct

Individuals who undertake Peer Review on behalf of RE should always adhere to the specific guidance, criteria and processes that underpin our delivery of the Scheme. In addition, the following good practice should be applied to all reviews:

**Objectivity, Impartiality and Integrity:** this should be maintained throughout the review process, irrespective of the personal or professional experience of the Reviewer. Reviewers should not accept any gifts or inducement which could influence, compromise or threaten their ability to act and to be seen as acting independently.

**Competence:** reviewers have a responsibility to inform RE in cases where they consider themselves to be insufficiently expert in the area for review i.e. where a case file involves Court Representation. If necessary, Reviewers should decline the review and return the material to RE.

**Professionalism:** reviewers must commit to being honest, thorough and providing straightforward communication in the performance of peer review activities. Reviewers should be consistent and accurate in their evaluations of information received during the peer review process and strive to be complete in the assessment activity, avoiding any omissions. Facts should be separated from opinion and clearly and concisely conveyed within assessment reports. Fundamentally, all Peer Review activity should be undertaken in a conscientious, diligent, respectful and efficient manner.

**Constructive critique:** while Reviewers are required to critically evaluate case files, they should aim to do so in a balanced way, wherever possible identifying strengths and phrasing criticisms in a constructive way. Personal attacks or criticisms are unacceptable. The review and resulting report should provide guidance on how the advice, approach and case file management processes might be improved, providing supporting evidence drawn from the case files reviewed to substantiate the feedback.

**Organisational sensitivity:** reviewers should keep under consideration the sensitive nature of the work they are reviewing and should structure the assessment report summary and feedback meeting as appropriate. By the very nature of the review process, trends may emerge relating to either organisational practice, individual performance or both, and engagement during the feedback process is critical to ensuring the acceptance of review outcomes.

**Timeliness and responsiveness:** every effort should be made to complete the review within the specified time period and Reviewers should notify RE in cases where this is not possible. Post assessment follow up discussions should take place within the timescales identified with the Service Level Agreement.

**Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:** reviewers should identify and declare in advance of the review, any potential conflicting interests that could impinge on the effectiveness or objectivity of the review process. This could include, but is not limited to, any organisational,

legal, ethical, financial, moral or personal conflict of interest. This should be assessed in conjunction with RE's guidance on conflict of interests. Where applicable, reviews should be declined.

**Confidentiality:** All information made available as part of the assessment process should be treated in the strictest confidence. Reviewers should maintain confidentiality and protect the identity of any Organisation, individual Adviser or client identified within a case file, by not disclosing, retaining or copying any information and by not discussing any aspect of the review process with colleagues. Reviewers must not take advantage of any information obtained as a result of their role and must adhere to the Confidentiality and Data Security/Data Protection policies of RE. This relates to all information received during the peer review assessment and the peer review results.

**Data Protection:** Reviewers must store and dispose of documents in compliance with the Data Protection Act, by storing documents in a secure place, not sharing or making copies of documents and returning or destroying documents in accordance with the guidance provided by RE. Any email exchange which contains confidential information i.e. an assessment report or action plan must be encrypted prior to sending.

**Misconduct:** Reviewers should inform RE (in confidence) when they become aware of practice which is considered to fall below good conduct e.g. practice which raises ethical concerns or identifies misconduct on the part of an Adviser or Organisation including plagiarism, fabrication or falsification.

**Engagement:** To ensure the success of the Scheme, reviewers should be engaged with the approach and assessment process throughout their involvement. This could involve participation in ongoing CPD, individual and group moderation and evaluation activities. Suggestions for ways in which the Scheme and assessment approach could be enhanced are encouraged, particularly during the early stages of delivery.